

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6681

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, MI

SUBJ: VIPYA PULPWOOD PROJECT

REF: BLANTYRE 1315 (NOTAL)

1. MINISTER OF FINANCE MATENJE ASKED AMBASSADOR TO CALL NOVEMBER 30 ON INSTRUCTIONS PRESIDENT BANDA TO ACQUAINT US WITH CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING VIPYA PULPWOOD PROJECT. MINISTER ALSO BRIEFING FRG AND DANES. UK AND SOUTH AFRICA ALREADY INFORMED.

2. ACCORDING TO MINISTER PRESIDENT BANDA HAS DIRECTED ESTABLISHMENT SPECIAL INTER-MINISTERIAL TASK FORCE CHAIRED BY JOHN TEMBO, GOVERNOR OF RESERVE BANK, TO HANDLE ALL ASPECTS PULPWOOD PROJECT. L.S. MIHOWA, PREVIOUSLY UNDER-SECRETARY OF FINANCE, IS IN CHARGE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS. OBJECTIVE IS TO BEGIN PROJECT ASAP, IF NECESSARY INSTALLING IN FIRST INSTANCE SMALLER PULP MILL THAN ENVISAGED BY CONSULTANTS JAAKKO POYRY CO. (OF FINLAND). PRESIDENT BANDA REJECTED AS TOO SLOW 1980 STARTING DATE PROPOSED BY CONSULTANTS. IBRD TEAM HAS BEEN IN MALAWI FOR PAST 10 DAYS STUDYING MATTER.

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3. MINISTER SAID PRESIDENT HOPED U.S., EITHER USG OR AMERICAN FIRMS, MIGHT ASSIST. HE MENTIONED PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT, FOR EXAMPLE MILL AND TRANSPORT, AND FINANCES. BECAUSE OF MAGNITUDE OF PROJECT (US\$147 MILLION), MINISTER ENVISAGED FORMATION OF CONSORTIUM. AMBASSADOR COMMENTED HE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO SEE INVOLVEMENT U.S. FIRMS AND WOULD INQUIRE WHAT COULD BE DONE.

4. DURING VISIT OF CHASE MANHATTAN GROUP HEADED BY DAVID ROCKEFELLER IN SEPTEMBER, PULPWOOD PROJECT WAS DISCUSSED WITH JOHN TEMBO. WE UNDERSTOOD DAVID BUCKMAN, VICE PRESIDENT AND AREA EXECUTIVE FOR AFRICA SOUTH OF SAHARA, INTENDED PROCEED FINLAND FOR FURTHER TALKS WITH JAAKKO POYRY CO. WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING FURTHER. PROJECT ALSO DISCUSSED WITH BANK OF AMERICA VICE PRESIDENTS R.P.M. CARSON FROM SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE AND CHARLES BILLMYER FROM LONDON OFFICE. BANK HAS BROUGHT PROJECT TO ATTENTION ST. REGIS PAPER CO. AT CONCLUSION HAS LAST VISIT NOVEMBER 28, CARLSON SAID HE INTENDED FOLLOW UP.

5. REQUEST WASHINGTON/LONDON INFORM CHASE MANHATTAN AND BANK OF AMERICA OF MINISTER'S APPROACH AND ENCOURAGE BANKS TO FOLLOW UP ON PROJECT. ALSO REQUEST USDOC BRING THIS INVESTMENT POSSIBILITY TO ATTENTION U.S. FIRMS.
BURDETT

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